Fill the Boot Guidebook

MDA®

HELP YOUR FIGHTER MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY
Thank You

We are so grateful to have supporters like you who are willing to go above and beyond to help kids and adults with muscular dystrophy, ALS and related life-threatening diseases live longer and grow stronger.

Last year, more than 100,000 fire fighters raised money for MDA and the families we serve living with devastating diseases to help bring them strength, independence and life through research, care and support. That money totaled more than $24 million through more than 1,600 Fill the Boot events and has helped lead to some major breakthroughs in research, including three drugs approved by the FDA for treating our diseases in the past year alone.

This document was created to help you be as successful as possible as we work together to accelerate more progress and more breakthroughs for families who are counting on us. MDA’s dedicated professional staff take the lead managing the myriad event details you’ve needed to help recruit members, liaison with fire service administration and carry out the noble effort of filling the boot.

We are grateful that for more than six decades, IAFF members have stood by MDA, striving to make a difference in the lives of those affected by muscular dystrophy and related diseases. Your support of this effort has helped make three new treatments available to MDA families and create a pipeline of many more potential treatments through research, while MDA clinicians provide comprehensive medical care that directly benefits the lives of people living with muscular dystrophy across the country.

Thanks for continuing to make this long-standing tradition so special. We’re counting on you!

Your Muscular Dystrophy Association

Top 10 Fill the Boot Events in 2016
1. L2068 — Fairfax County, VA
   $521,509 Raised
2. L0058 — Dallas, TX
   $519,244 Raised
3. L2881 — Cal Fire
   $471,681 Raised
4. L0341 — Houston, TX
   $445,541 Raised
5. L2665 — Eastern Missouri
   $239,494 Raised
6. L0176 — Tulsa, OK
   $226,437 Raised
7. L0624 — San Antonio, TX
   $198,544 Raised
8. L0157 — Oklahoma City, OK
   $184,337 Raised
9. L0493 — Phoenix, AZ
   $181,894 Raised
10. L1826 — Southwest Florida
    $169,858 Raised

Top 10 Fill the Boot Events Per Member in 2016
1. L1860 — Newark, NJ
   $6,073 Raised per Member
2. L3049 — Mentor-on-the-Lake, OH
   $3,652 Raised per Member
3. L4968 — Burrillville, RI
   $2,250 Raised per Member
4. L4710 — Elk Creek, CO
   $2,194 Raised per Member
5. L0598 — Austin, MN
   $2,000 Raised per Member
6. L0287 — Long Beach, NY
   $1,674 Raised per Member
7. L3912 — Enfield, CT
   $1,674 Raised per Member
8. L2469 — Gastonia, NC
   $1,568 Raised per Member
9. L4652 — Wells, ME
   $1,467 Raised per Member
10. L0226 — Marionette, WI
    $1,441 Raised per Member
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About MDA

Every day, kids and adults are diagnosed with muscular dystrophy, ALS and related life-threatening diseases that take away their ability to walk, run, hug, dress themselves, talk and even breathe.

Thanks to fire fighters in hometowns across America, the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) and fire fighters are dedicated to changing that. With our collective strength, we work together to free individuals — and the families who love them — from the harm of muscular dystrophy, ALS and related life-threatening diseases that take away physical strength, independence and life.

To do this, we:

• Find research breakthroughs across diseases to accelerate treatments and cures.
• Care for kids and adults from day one.
• Empower families with services and support in hometowns across America.

All of these efforts work to make today free from the harm of muscular dystrophy and tomorrow free from the disease itself, and communities across the country see year after year the vital role the IAFF plays in this lifesaving mission.

Our Team is Here for You

With nearly 100 offices, MDA has staff dedicated to the IAFF and the Fill the Boot program in every community. A national team and an IAFF national coordinator provide additional support to ensure the success of local events and strong relationships and connections to this meaningful and long-standing tradition.

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“For more than 60 years, our members have been working hard for MDA, filling the boot on behalf of this great charity. They know that what they do truly makes a difference in the lives of so many. Until there is a cure, we plan to continue the partnership.”

— IAFF General President  
Harold A. Schaitberger
About the Fill the Boot Program

How to Get Started

New to MDA?

1. Visit firefighters.mda.org and sign up online.
2. Choose a Fill the Boot coordinator from your local to work with MDA staff to customize a program that works for your local and get the approvals needed to move forward.
3. Set the dates and secure the locations for your event.
4. Set a fundraising goal.
5. Work with MDA staff to get all the materials and plan your marketing and promotional support to generate publicity and awareness in your community.
6. Enjoy your event with your fellow brothers and sisters — be safe, have fun and welcome to the tradition!

Already Involved with MDA?

Schedule a meeting with your MDA representative to start planning your next Fill the Boot event. Not sure who to reach out to? Just email members of our team (see page 4).

See overview of all resources available on page 9.

The spirited tradition of the Fill the Boot program is a long-standing collaboration between the Muscular Dystrophy Association and the International Association of Fire Fighters. In its first year in 1953, fire fighters in Boston raised $5,000 for MDA and in 1954 MDA was adopted by resolution as the charity of choice (Resolution No. 53). Year after year, the program continues to make an impact in local communities with more than $24 million raised by fire fighters at more than 1,600 Fill the Boot events in 2016 alone. To date, the IAFF has raised more than $607 million to support MDA’s commitment to save and improve the lives of individuals living with these devastating diseases.

To make this possible, dedicated fire fighters hit the streets and neighborhood storefronts asking pedestrians, motorists, customers and other passersby to make a donation to MDA, helping them fill their boot with contributions. Ideally, Fill the Boot events are scheduled in the spring and summer months with all shifts participating on duty with collections arranged near their stations.

The money raised through Fill the Boot events in your community supports programs for local kids and adults living with muscular dystrophy, including the following:

• MDA is currently funding about 150 research projects around the world.
• Local MDA Care Centers at top hospitals and health care facilities across the United States and Puerto Rico provide best-in-class, comprehensive care.
• MDA hosts nearly 75 summer camps across the country for kids with muscular dystrophy at no charge to their families.
• MDA provides activities for families, including support groups, educational events and family gatherings, in hometowns across America.
Fill the Boot Coordinator

The Role of MDA Fill the Boot Coordinator

The role of the Fill the Boot coordinator is very important to ensuring success in your local MDA Fill the Boot drives. We encourage you to select someone that embodies these characteristics:

• Inspires commitment to the partnership and tradition between MDA and fire fighters;
• Has leadership skills and works well with colleagues and management;
• Makes a two- to three-year commitment to the job;
• Able to recruit strong leaders to help with the drive;
• Enthusiastic and wants to be involved;
• Has an interest in learning about MDA and its local programs and services;
• Receives satisfaction from being part of a noble past and a bright future;
• An active union member interested in further developing leadership skills; and
• Desires to make an impact in the local community.

Planning the Fill the Boot Event

Your MDA office is here to provide information, support and guidance to help you with every aspect of your role as a fire fighter coordinator and with planning a successful event.

They’ll help you plan the best event for your local, including:

• Building a safety plan. Choosing the right locations with intersections that have medians, sidewalks and a place for apparatus.
• Leveraging your leadership role by forming a boot drive committee to help you plan all aspects of your event.
• Double-checking with each station and shift to make sure they have everything they need — and is excited about the event — before going out to collect.
• Choosing the right time of day for the highest volume. Consider contacting your city or county engineering department to find out the best time to set up at high-volume intersections.
• Deciding ahead of time on alternate dates. Be flexible in case of a scheduling issues or bad weather.
• Setting a fundraising goal for your local.
• Creating a media kickoff event to engage your community.
• Meeting local families to see the impact you’re making firsthand.
Building a Safety Plan

The Importance of Safety:

• Wear orange/yellow vests or reflective material on clothing.
• Intersections should be well-marked with cones.
• Post MDA banners/Caution and Toll signs well ahead of your location so that oncoming traffic is aware of the event.
• Make sure traffic knows you are there.
• Parked apparatus should be highly visible. If allowable, keep emergency lights on.
• Initiate all collections from roadside or median.
• Never stop traffic, and only approach stopped vehicles.
• Always maintain a professional attitude.
• All active and retired fire fighters, cadets, fire fighters in training and EMTs working for fire departments are covered per MDA insurance while collecting on behalf of MDA. Ask your local MDA staff for a copy of the insurance policy.
• Your safety is our top priority, and MDA has sample safety plans available for your reference.
• Stay hydrated!

Setting Fundraising Goals

Keys to Goal-Setting:

• Call on key members to be part of the goal-setting process.
• Analyze last year’s results by battalion, station, shift and individual contributions.
• Create collection goals that are relatively challenging, but also realistic and attainable.
• Successful boot drives strive for 100 percent participation.
• Get 100 percent agreement on goals and strategy.
• It’s absolutely vital that everyone from the chief down be aware of the goals.

Consider setting other goals, including:

• Everyone wearing their uniform
• Department involvement or number of fire fighters participating
• Securing department apparatus on-site
• Media at event or hosting a media kickoff event
• MDA attending meetings
• Challenge another local
• Fire fighter families helping
• Chief endorsement
• MDA training for new fire fighters
• Event occurring on multiple days
• Event occurring in multiple intersections
Fill the Boot Suggested Planning Timeline

**Six to Nine Months Before Your Fill the Boot Event:**
- Business planning meetings among MDA and departments.
- Determine a plan for fire fighter motivation (e.g., MDA family station visits, pizza party at the station for MDA kids)
- Recruit members for your boot drive committee. Try to have a representative at the battalion level, station level, shift level, etc.
- Work with your MDA staff person to schedule family station visits before your boot drive begins.
- Ask fire chief/union president to write endorsement letters (MDA can provide draft copy).
- Contact MDA if you need help with insurance, permits, etc. MDA automatically includes fire fighters on certificates of insurance.
- Determine logistics of drive (e.g., which days/intersections, internal incentives, money handling).

**Three Months Before Your Fill the Boot Event:**
- Collaborate with the fire chief/union president on setting a goal for your department and break it down to each station, shift and person. Make sure everyone, including administrative and office personnel, is aware of the goal. Be creative. You need a road map to get to your destination.
- Get on the agenda for battalion chiefs meeting and get support for your goal.
- Ask for their help in getting every station, every shift and every fire fighter involved for a minimum number of hours each collection day.
- Assist MDA in getting on agendas for City/County Fire Fighter Appreciation Week Proclamations.
- Work with MDA staff to promote the event (media and PIO contacts).
- Do you know a local celebrity to help you kick off your drive? This will surely attract the media and build community awareness for your efforts.

**Two Months Before Your Fill the Boot Event:**
- Attend any scheduled proclamation presentations.
- Establish a method of keeping track of all money that comes in.
- Work with MDA to implement publicity strategy.
- Share a countdown to your Boot Drive with all of your stations — make sure everyone knows the date.
- Order boot drive supplies from MDA.

**One Month Before Your Fill the Boot Event:**
- Distribute supplies to stations with detailed information on how collections and money pickup will be handled.
- Begin implementing your social media campaign.
- Set up your Virtual Fill the Boot team (Online Donor Drive) at filltheboot.donordrive.com.
- Establish a method of communicating daily collections to each station every day of the drive. This will promote competition (call every station every day of the drive to remind them to go out).
- Attend proclamation presentations.

**After the Event:**
- Post a report that contains the amount collected by every shift/unit. Keep records from year to year.
- Announce the winners of any internal incentives.
- Thank your fellow fire fighters in newsletters, websites and on social media.
- Plan a camp activity and recruit your fellow fire fighters to attend an MDA Summer Camp near you. It’s a great opportunity to meet the children who benefit from the money collected during your annual boot drive.
- Do a wrap-up meeting with your committee members and set goals for the next year.
MDA staff will work with you to make sure you have all the resources and supplies you need to execute a great event and will work with you to generate awareness about the event in your community.

**Fill the Boot Supplies Available (Provided by MDA):**
- Event Flyer (available in multiple sizes)
- Banners (truck-sized)
- Posters (available in two sizes)
- Stickers for Donations
- Toll Poster
- Boot Stickers
- Caution Sign

**Media Outreach Tools and Templates Available:**
- Messaging Guide and Talking Points
- Fill the Boot Publicity Timeline
- Fill the Boot Press Release
- Fill the Boot Media Alert
- Media Relations & Publicity Overview Guide
- Fill the Boot Proclamation Media Alert
- Fill the Boot Proclamation
- Fill the Boot Radio Scripts
- Fill the Boot Media Interview Tip Sheet
- Post-Event Fill the Boot Press Release

**Media Kickoff Event Resources Available:**
- Strategic Overview for Media Kickoff Event
- Kickoff Event Press Release
- Kickoff Event Media Alert
- Kickoff Event Tip Sheet for Media
- Media Kickoff Agenda
- Media Kickoff Event Script
- Fill the Boot Presentation Folder

**Social Media Resources Available:**
- Tips and Sample Messages
- Facebook Profile Image
- Social Media Graphics

**Video Resources:**
- 15-second and 30-second Public Service Announcements
- B-Roll Package for Media Outlets
- Fill the Boot Recruitment Video
- MDA Summer Camp Thank You Video
- Fill the Boot Motivational Video

**Outdoor and Digital Advertising Resources Available:**
- Save the Date Outdoor Billboard Artwork (available in multiple sizes)
- Thank You Outdoor Billboard Artwork (available in multiple sizes)
- Thank You Web Banner for Your Website

There are many opportunities to get involved and meet MDA families in your community — ask your local MDA staff for more information on the events near you.
Designated a “Top-Rated Charity” by the American Institute of Philanthropy, MDA is the first nonprofit to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Medical Association for “significant and lasting contributions to the health and welfare of humanity.”